DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 143 042 CS 501 780

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TITLE Plight of Arts and Education in America.
PUB DATE Aug 77
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Theatre Asscciation (Chicago, August 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Centers; *Cultural Enrichment; *Federal Aid; *Federal Legislation; *Financial Problems; Financial Support; *Fine Arts; Government Role; State Aid; *Tax Allocation

ABSTRACT

Despite an upsurge of public interest in the arts, cultural organizations in the United States are experiencing a grave financial crisis. This paper cites facts and figures that indicate traditional funding sources are inadequate to withstand the pressures of spiraling costs and dwindling resources, state arts appropriations are discouragingly low, and federal appropriations to the arts are entirely inadequate for meeting the needs of the nation's cultural institutions. The Arts and Education Check-Off Bill, HR 1042, is described; this bill calls for the addition of two pledge boxes to the 1040 income tax form, in which taxpayers can indicate their willingness to allow a deduction from their tax refund or to add to their tax payment, for the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Funds derived in this way will be used for programming and for general support of arts groups and individuals. There is also a provision in the bill prohibiting Congress from cutting federal funding of the endowments when the bill becomes law. Prominent supporters of the bill are listed. (GW)

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PLIGHT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Remarks by
Congressman Fred Richmond
before the
American Theatre Association
Chicago, Illinois
August 16, 1977

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT IS A PLEASURE TO PARTICIPATE AT THE 41ST ANNUAL AMERICAN THEATRE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION. YOUR EFFORTS HAVE ENRICHED OUR CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT, REACHING INTO EACH STATE, EACH COMMUNITY, AND PERHAPS EVEN INTO EACH AMERICAN HOME. YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN THEATRE IS INCALCULABLE.

IT WAS THE GREAT SPANISH PLAYWRIGHT LOPE DE VEGA WHO WROTE; "ALL YOU NEED FOR THEATRE IS FLOOR BOARDS AND A GREAT PASSION." PROBABLY NO GROUP UNDERSTANDS THIS BETTER THAN MEMBERS OF YOUR ASSOCIATION. I HAVE COME HERE TODAY TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR COURAGE AND PERSISTENCE, AND TO BLESS YOU FOR YOUR PASSION.

I HAVE COME HERE TODAY TO DISCUSS THE "PLIGHT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION IN AMERICA." OUR COUNTRY, NOW IN THE ERA OF THE TRICENTENNIAL MUST REALIZE THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE GREAT ERA OF AMERICAN CULTURAL MATURITY. WE ARE OLD ENOUGH AS A NATION TO RECOGNIZE THAT CULTURAL LEGACY IS THE MOST ENDURING PRODUCT OF ANY CIVILIZATION. LONG AFTER BONES HAVE TURNED TO DUST; MASONRY HAS CRUMBLED, AND PERHAPS EVEN LEGISLATION OF LONG FORGOTTEN CONGRESSMEN HAS BEEN OBSCURED -- WHAT REMAINS WORTH REMEMBERING? THE COMEDY-TRAGEDY OF HISTORY RECOUNTED IN PAINTING, POETRY, PLAYS, MUSIC AND SCULPTURE REMAINS TO CHRONICLE THE SAGA OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS

CS 501 780

AND FEARS, OF PEACE AND WAR, OF FEAST AND FAMINE.

"ART IS A NECESSITY OF LIFE". PROUST HAS SAID THAT "WITHOUT ART WE DO NOT KNOW OURSELVES, NOR ANYONE ELSE!". AND IT WAS SAUL BELLOW WHO EXPLAINED THAT "ART ATTEMPTS TO FIND IN THE UNIVERSE, THAT WHICH IS FUNDAMENTAL, ENDURING AND ESSENTIAL."

WE IN THE PRESENT ARE OBLIGED TO PERPETUATE THE LEGACY OF THE PAST; BUT WE ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE TO ADD OUR OWN UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION FOR THE FUTURE. HERE AND NOW WE MUST BE RESPONSIBLE TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENT TO SPAN THE CHASM OF TIME -- SO THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL, AND ESSENTIAL WILL ENDURE.

IN EVER INCREASING NUMBERS AMERICANS ARE RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO PROTECT OUR NATION'S CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT. WITH THE SAME SENSE OF URGENCY AS THOSE WHO FEAR FOR THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT WE MUST ACT TO ENHANCE AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT OF AMERICA'S HEART AND SOUL. THE URGENCY OF THIS EFFORT CAN BE SEEN EVERYWHERE AS "CONCERNED-CITIZENS" BAND TOGETHER; AND AS SYMPHONY ORCESTRAS, OPERA AND THEATRE COMPANIES ROOT IN THE FERTILE AMERICAN SOIL.

OVER 8 MILLION PEOPLE ATTENDED AT LEAST ONE OPERA LAST YEAR; AND ONE OF EVERY 5 PLAYS A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES HAVE BECOME MORE ACCESSIBLE. THERE ARE LINES AT MUSEUMS; WHILE TICKETS FOR THEATERS, SYMPHONIES, OPERAS ARE SOLD OUT IN ADVANCE. THERE IS A GROWING TRADITION OF AMERICAN ART AND A RECOGNITION OF AMERICAN ARTISTS OF WHICH EVERYONE CAN BE PROUD.

BUT ART CANNOT BE DEEP ROOTED IF IT IS ONLY THE ANTIQUE PRESERVE OF THE PAST; OR THE EXOTIC IMPORT FROM ABROAD. REAL INDIGENOUS ART MUST BE

NURTURED BY TAP ROOTS PENETRATING TO THE WELL SPRINGS OF OUR CREATIVE VITALITY. THE LIFE LINE OF OUR LIVING, CREATIVE PEOPLE—PEOPLE WHOSE LIFE WORK AND CREATIVE ENERGIES DEMAND OUR ATTENTION AND RESPECT, PEOPLE WHOSE PASSION WILL NOT DISSIPATE,—MUST RECEIVE SUSTENANCE.

YET SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS IS NOT WHAT IT SHOULD BE. DESPITE THE UPSURGE OF PUBLIC INTEREST, CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN OUR COUNTRY ARE EXPERIENCING A GRAVE FINANCIAL CRISIS. IT IS IRONIC INDEED THAT THE UNITED STATES, WHICH BOASTFULLY CONSIDERS ITSELF THE CENTER OF WESTERN CULTURE, HAS PERMITTED THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES TO DETERIORATE TO A LEVEL OF SUBSISTENCE WHERE EACH DAY MORE TIME AND ENERGEY IS DEVOTED NOT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL, BUT TO THE FIGHT FOR FINANCIAL SURVIVAL.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN'S RECENT LITANY OF THE CRISIS IN PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTIONS DOCUMENTS THE PERNICIOUS EFFECT OF CUTBACK AND CLOSINGS. RISING OPERATING COSTS FORCE MOST THEATRE GROUPS TO SUBSIST FROM DAY TO DAY; MANY TO CANCEL ENTIRE SEASONS; AND SOME TRAGICALLY TO DISBAND COMPLETELY. THE ECONOMICS OF THEATRE INDICATES CLEARLY THAT THE TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF FUNDING ARE INADEQUATE, DESPITE THE SPECTACULAR GROWTH OF THEATRE AUDIENCES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CONTINUE TO PARACHUTE MORE AND MORE THEATRE MAJORS EACH YEAR INTO AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH, DESPITE HEIGHTENED PUBLIC INTEREST, OFFERS FEWER AND FEWER JOBS. IN THIS RESPECT WE ARE WASTING OUR MOST PRECIOUS NATURAL RESOURCE - THE CREATIVE TALENT OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE; WHILE WE CAST OUT PROFESSIONAL ARTS EDUCATORS ESSENTIAL TO THEIR TRAINING IN OUR SHORT-SIGHTED EFFORTS TO "RETRENCH"

TRADITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES, WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS IN THE WORLD ARE HELPLESS TO WITHSTAND THE TWIN PRESSURES OF SPIRALLING COSTS AND DWINDLING RESOURCES. BOX OFFICE CHARGES HAVE REACHED EYE-POPPING LEVELS, THREATENING TO EXTINGUISH THE NEWLY DEMOCRATIZED DESIRE FOR ACCESS TO CULTURAL EVENTS.

PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY AND FOUNDATION PORTFOLIOS HAVE BEEN DEALT STUNNING BODY BLOWS RESULTING IN HEART-BREAKING RE-EVALUATION OF PRIORITIES CULMINATING IN CUT-BACKS. UNIVERSITY ENDOWMENTS ARE NO LONGER ADEQUATE TO SECURE INSTITUTIONS IMPERILED BY THE FISCAL DISTRESS OF BURGEONING OPERATING COSTS. AND THE END IS NOT YET IN SIGHT.

ALTHOUGH 32 STATES HAVE INCREASED THEIR ARTS APPROPRIATIONS FROM FISCAL YEAR 76 TO FISCAL YEAR 77, THE TOTAL PICTURE REMAINS DISCOURAGING:
-- THE NATIONAL TOTAL OF STATE APPROPRIATIONS DECREASED BY MORE THAN 5 MILLION DOLLARS.

-- TWENTY STATES STILL PROVIDE LESS THAN ONE THIN DIME PER CAPITA TO THE ARTS.

-- ONE STATE, NEW YORK, STILL ACCOUNTS FOR WELL OVER HALF THE NATIONAL TOTAL.

CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATIONS TO THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENTS FOR THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES HAVE GROWN STEADILY - AND YET STILL BARELY REACH $1.00 PER YEAR FOR EACH CITIZEN. THE BUDGET OF THE NEA IS BARELY ENOUGH TO SUPPORT ONE MAJOR OPERA, ONE MAJOR SYMPHONY, ONE GREAT ART MUSEUM AND ONE MAJOR REPERTORY THEATRE. YET, IT MUST, BY RIGHT AND STATUE, ADDRESS THESE NEEDS FOR 50 STATES, 3 TERRITORIES, 150 MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS,

AND COUNTLESS SMALL CITIES AND TOWNS. THE ENDOWMENT IS FURTHER MANDATED TO ENCOURAGE A HEALTHY CLIMATE ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN CREATIVE ARTIST, BOTH IN TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINES AND IN A CONSTANTLY EXPANDING FIELD OF EXPERIMENTATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE ARTS IN AMERICA FACE A $1 BILLION DEFICIT, AND THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY PROJECTS DEFICITS APPROACHING $3 BILLION. EVEN THE MOST WELCOME ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET INCREASES FOR THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AND THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES, DO NOT BEGIN TO MEET THE NEEDS.

SYMPHONIES, BALLET, THEATRE, OPERA, MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES ARE NOT SELF-SUPPORTING. IF THE PUBLIC ONLY KNEW WHAT WAS BEHIND THE SCENES WHEN THEY SEE $8.50 PRINTED ON THEIR THEATRE TICKETS! -- THAT BEHIND THE $8.50 THERE MAY BE AN ADDITIONAL $20 OR $30 IN COSTS, AND THAT DESPITE SOLD OUT HOUSES AND COSTLY TICKET PRICES, CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS RARELY BREAK EVEN, LET ALONE MAKE MONEY.

I HAVE HAD NO MORE PAINFUL TASK IN CONGRESS THAN REVIEWING AND TRYING -- TOO OFTEN UNSUCCESSFULLY - TO SAVE PROGRAMS IN COLLEGES, SCHOOLS, THEATRES, CONCERT HALLS AND GALLERIES, AS BUDGETS FORCE CUTBACK AFTER CUTBACK. "RENTRENCHMENT" IS A WORD I'VE COME TO HATE.

HOW, I ASK MYSELF, CAN A NATION THAT IS ABLE TO SCOOP UP AND UNRAVEL THE MYSTERIES OF SOIL STRUCTURE ON MARS, ALLOW PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND MAJOR MUSEUMS TO CLOSE EVERY EVENING AND ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY?

HOW CAN WE CONTINUE TO SANCTION THIS NATIONAL POLICY OF CUTBACKS INSTEAD OF RESPONDING TO THE URGENT NEEDS OF OUR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS?

WE CANNOT LOOK ONLY TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR STATE LEGISLATORS TO ASSUME THE ENTIRE BURDEN.

WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO RELY ON PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND PHILANTHROPY TO COVER THE COSTS INCURRED IN PRODUCING WORKS OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE.

WHAT WE NEED IS A FULL COMMITMENT FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES MUST ASSUME A LARGER SHARE OF THE FINANCIAL BURDEN AND I BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE READY TO ACCEPT THIS RESPONSIBILITY.

FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF CARNEGIE HALL, FROM MY SERVICE ON THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, AND FROM MY TENURE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, I HAVE SEEN THE URGENT NEEDS OF OUR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, AND I HAVE BECOME AWARE OF A NEW WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE PUBLIC TO GUARANTEE THEIR SURVIVAL.

TODAY, I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER ONE CONCRETE, POSITIVE AND DARING STEP TO REVIVE THE FALTERING CULTURAL COMMUNITY. TODAY I ASK FOR YOUR HELP IN AN EFFORT TO RADICALLY EXPAND THE FUND RAISING BASE AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS.

TOGETHER, I BELIEVE WE CAN DEVELOP A PLAN WHICH WILL REACH MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WHO HAVE NEVER DIRECTLY PARTICIPATED IN OR MADE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO ANY CULTURAL ENDEAVOR. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY, WE MUST SEEK TO BROADEN THE FINANCIAL BASE OF THESE INSTITUTIONS JUST AS WE HAVE BROADENED THEIR APPEAL OVER THE YEARS.

LAST JANUARY I INTRODUCED THE ARTS AND EDUCATION CHECK-OFF BILL, HR 1042. THIS BILL OFFERS THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE DOLLARS WITH VIRTUALLY NO OVERHEAD OR "FUND RAISING" EXPENSES.

THIS WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED BY PLACING TWO PLEDGE BOXES ON THE 1040 INCOME TAX FORM - WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, IS THE MOST WIDELY READ DOCUMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NEXT TO THE BIBLE - TO ALLOW A DEDUCTION FROM AN INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYERS' REFUND OR AN ADDITION TO THIS TAX PAYMENT TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENTS FOR THE ARTS AND FOR THE HUMANITIES. THESE MONIES WILL BE USED FOR PROGRAMMING AND GENERAL SUPPORT OF ARTS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS; NOT FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENTS. THERE IS ALSO A PROVISION IN THE BILL PROHIBITING CONGRESS FROM CUTTING FEDERAL FUNDING OF THE ENDOWMENTS WHEN THE BILL BECOMES LAW.

TWO RECENT POLLS TAKEN BY THE NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER OF THE ARTS INDICATED THAT 64% OF THE ADULT PUBLIC WOULD BE WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE AN ADDITIONAL $5 A YEAR TO THE ARTS UNDER THIS PROGRAM. 47% WOULD CONTRIBUTE $25 AND 36% WOULD BE WILLING TO DONATE $50 OR MORE ANNUALLY.

THESE POLLS INDICATE THAT THE POSSIBLE FUNDS RAISED FROM THE PEOPLE AND NOT FROM THE GOVERNMENT - COULD REACH OVER 1.7 BILLION DOLLARS EACH YEAR; COMPARED TO THE 174 MILLION DOLLARS APPROPRIATED FOR THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENTS LAST YEAR.

A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THIS APPROACH IS TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE AVERAGE U.S. TAXPAYER DOES, IN FACT, RECEIVE A TAX REFUND. LAST YEAR 63.8 MILLION PEOPLE (OR 78.5% OF ALL THOSE FILING RETURNS) RECEIVED REFUNDS AVERAGING $444.39. THIS REPRESENTS A POOL OF MORE THAN 29 BILLION DOLLARS.

THE FUNDING CONCEPT EMBODIED IN HR 1042, THE ARTS AND EDUCATION BILL, IS SUPPORTED BY A WIDE RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS SPEARHEADED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND EDUCATION -- A NON-PROFIT SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO INCREASING FUNDING FOR THE ARTS AND EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES. THE INITIAL GOAL OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IS TO SEEK PASSAGE OF

HR 1042.

AMONG SUPPORTERS OF THE BILL ARE; HENRY FONDA WHO SERVES AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND EDUCATION, STEPHEN SONDHEIM, THEODORE BIKEL, ROBERT BRUSTEIN, DALE HUFFINGTON, HARVEY LICHTENSTEIN, KATHLEEN NOLAN, DAVID RINTELS, RICHARD RODGERS, JOSEPH PAPP, AGNES DE MILLE, MELISSA HAYDEN, LEONARD BERNSTEIN, ALVIN AILEY, ANTHONY BLISS, AVERY FISHER, LOUIS B. HAGER, LINCOLN KIRSTEIN, DELBERT MANN, ROGER STEVENS, MELVIN VAN PEEBLES, THE LEAGUE OF RESIDENT THEATERS, SCREEN EXTRAS GUILD, ACTORS EQUITY, DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA INC., ORGANIC THEATRE COMPANY OF CHICAGO, SCREEN ACTORS GUILD, THE ASSOCIATED ACTORS AND ARTISTS OF AMERICA, THE LEAGUE OF NEW YORK THEATRES AND PRODUCERS, INC., THE SHAKESPEARE PLAYERS INC., THEATRE MEMPHIS, THEATRE VANGUARD, UNIVERSITY RESIDENT THEATRE ASSOCIATION, FOLGER SHAKESPEARE THEATRE, OFF-OFF BROADWAY ALLIANCE, AND COUNTLESS OTHERS.

IT IS NOT UTOPIAN TO DEMAND THE PROTECTION OF OUR GREATEST NATIONAL RESOURCE; THE TALENT AND BRAINS OF OUR MOST CREATIVE CITIZENS. WE MUST RENOUNCE THE ROMANTIC ILLUSION AND DISABUSE OURSELVES OF THE MYTH THAT POVERTY IS INSPIRING FOR ARTISTS! IT IS DEMEANING!

WE MUST TEACH OUR PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT CULTURAL ENDEAVORS DO NOT MAKE PROFITS AND DO NOT FOLD UP FOR LACK OF RELEVANCE AND MERIT.

WE MUST HALT THE EROSION OF BODY AND SOUL WHICH RESULTS WHEN THE CREATIVE ENERGIES OF AMERICAN TALENT IS SQUANDERED IN A FIGHT FOR FISCAL SURVIVAL.

WE MUST BLOW THE MYTH THAT ONLY THE MEDICI CAN BE PATRONS OF THE ARTS. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE MUST JOIN TOGETHER, LINKING ARTISTS, FILM-MAKERS, PATRONS, POLITICIANS AND SCHOLARS TO SEEK FISCAL REMEDIES. WE MUST REACH BEYOND OUR SPECIALIZED LOYALITIES AND IN THE WISE WORDS

OF ROGER W. HEYNES (OUT-GOING PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION), ENCOURAGE EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN ORDER TO BRING INFLUENCE TO BEAR ON CRUCIAL DECISIONS. SOCIAL REALITY REQUIRES IT! BUT DR. HEYNES CALLS FOR EVEN MORE ... FOR A COLLECTIVE "COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY," A WILLINGNESS SURPASSING RHETORIC. HE APPEALS FOR "LESS SHRILLNESS, LESS POSTURING" AND FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF "LARGER VISIONS" WHICH "STRETCH SPECIALIZED LOYALITIES."

"THE TOTAL POSTURE OF AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION'S STATESMANSHIP INVOLVES BOTH THE VIGOROUS PURSUIT OF ITS OWN NEEDS AND AN EQUALLY DETERMINED EFFORT TOWARD THE WELL BEING OF ALL MEMBERS OF OUR HETEROGENEOUS COMMUNITY."

HR 1042 PROPOSES A LARGER VISION -- IT REQUIRES YOUR SUPPORT AND VIGOROUS INVOLVEMENT.

I ASK THOSE OF YOU FOR WHOM ART IS A NECESSITY OF LIFE TO SUPPORT THE ARTS AND EDUCATION BILL. I ASK YOU TO MAKE YOUR VOICES HEARD BY URGING YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR STUDENTS AND YOUR REPRESENTATIVES TO JOIN THE EFFORT TO PASS HR 1042.

JOIN THE 88 COLLEAGUES OF MINE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WHO HAVE ALREADY CO-SPONSORED THIS BILL. LET'S GET ON WITH THE BEST IN AMERICA. WE DARE NOT ASK OURSELVES "CAN THE SHOW GO ON?" BECAUSE HERE WE KNOW THAT THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

THANK YOU.